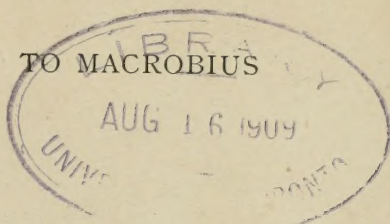


THE INTERPRETATION OF
VERGIL

WITH

SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MACROBIUS



THE CHARLES OLDHAM ESSAY
1909

BY

STANLEY TATE COLLINS

SCHOLAR OF WADHAM COLLEGE

Oxford

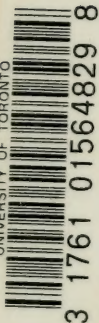
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*“Haec est . . . Maronis gloria, ut nullius laudibus
crescat, nullius vituperatione minuatur.”*

—MACROBIUS, *Saturnalia*, I. 24.

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PREFACE.

IN this essay, originally entitled "Macrobius and Vergilian Criticism," my object has been rather to fix the position of Macrobius among Vergilian critics than to give a detailed account of the actual criticisms in the *Saturnalia* and the *Commentary*. In order to give a clear idea of the relation between Macrobius and other critics, it has been necessary to prefix a short account of the early writers on Vergil and to add a sketch of some ideas about his work current in the Middle Ages (the magical legends being of course omitted).

The whole essay thus gives in outline the history (to the fourteenth century) of Vergilian interpretation. Surprisingly little literature exists bearing directly on this subject, Comparetti's great work on Vergil dealing rather with the legends above mentioned, though he is of use as providing a popular account of Vergilian criticism; and even in Germany scholars seem to have found the "sources" of Macrobius a more interesting theme than his value.

The large amount of material involved has made it necessary in the interests of compression both to abandon all pretensions to style and to relegate a multitude of illustrations, etc., to the footnotes.

CHAPTER I.

VERGIL DOWN TO 400 A.D.

IN all probability no poet has ever enjoyed so great a reputation in his own lifetime as did Vergil. From the very first he appealed to all classes alike—the vulgar, the man of letters and the grammarian, as is proved by his popularity in recitations at the theatre, by the testimonies found in Ovid¹ and Propertius², and by the fact that he became a text-book in schools.

He was simple enough to appeal to the lower classes, illustrated at the same time all the “figures” dear to the rhetorician,³ and satisfied the critical ears of those with a real taste for good poetry. Hence the early critics of Vergil fall naturally into these three classes of the proletariat, the truly cultured, and the pedants, rhetoricians and grammarians.

What the common people thought about Vergil we cannot discover, save that they admired him, for the only record of their feelings consists in such remains as the wall-writings of Pompeii. We are left therefore with the criticisms adverse and favourable of the other two classes named.

Of the grammarians a long string of names has been handed down, many of which are to us names and nothing more.⁴ We are told in the *Life of Vergil* attributed to Aelius Donatus that Herennius made a list of Vergil's faults, Perellius Faustus of his plagiarisms, and that Q. Octavius Avitus wrote several volumes of criticism. We know also that Carvilius Pictor wrote an attack on the *Aeneid*, and that Cornutus⁵ found many faults with it.

The kind of criticism which is found in these writers was often captious but not always unjust.⁶ They pointed out that lightning did not follow thunder, as in *Aen.* VIII. 392, and asked how in *Aen.* III. 70, a south wind could be said to

¹ *Ars Am.*, III. 387; *Rem. Am.*, 395; *Trist.*, IV. 10. 15.

² II. 34. 66.

³ Cf. the horrified cry of Albucius Silus in Seneca, *Controv.* VII., “Schemata tolluntur ex rerum natura!”

⁴ Lists are given by Ribbeck, *Proleg.*, and H. Nettleship in Conington's *Vergil*, I. lvii sqq.

⁵ *Gellius*, IX. 10.

⁶ Ribbeck, *Proleg.* 110 sqq.; *Gell.*, X. 16; V. 8.

"invite to the voyage" a ship starting from Thrace: they objected to *Aen.* I. 182, that biremes were not known in the times of the Trojan War, and noted anachronisms such as the mention of Camarina, Gela and Agrigentum in *Aen.* III. 701—3.

Vergil was defended against these and other early critics chiefly by Q. Asconius Pedianus¹; Metrodorus² also upheld the accuracy of the poet's astrological references.

Of commentators in the strict sense there is a lengthy list, beginning with Q. Caecilius Epirota, and C. Julius Hyginus, who noted several anachronisms³ but was rash in criticism,⁴ Julius Modestus, M. Valerius Probus, a valuable and sane writer,⁵ Caesellius Vindex, Terentius Scaurus, Velius Longus, Sulpicius Apollinaris, Pollio (not Asinius), Aemilius Asper, Flavius Caper, Urbanus, Julius Haterianus, Julius Romanus, Palaemon Gallus, Diomedes, Charisius (who drew from all his predecessors), Arusianus Messius, Marius Victorinus, Rufus Festus Avienus, Aelius Donatus, a foolish writer, Tiberius Claudius Donatus, who is very valuable, Junius Philargyrius, Servius, the most important, Asterius, and the *Scholia Bernensia* and *Veronensia*.⁶

Of all these, barely half a dozen names are of real importance. Probus is noteworthy as a sensible critic (*e.g.*, of the tales of Camilla and Dido), who had also some idea what the *Aeneid* as a whole was about: he also introduced into Vergilian criticism the Alexandrine "*notae criticae*." Asper also had good sense: and Ti. Claud. Donatus, despising pedantic details, took a fairly wide view of the meaning of the poem. As for Servius, we cannot dwell fully on his merits and demerits,⁷ or on the question as to which is the real Servius, the longer or shorter form of the commentary.⁸

Servius never rises above details: all he has to say about Vergil as a whole, his art, manner and method, is contained in about forty lines. "*Sola superest explanatio*." And the explanation! *Arma*=war: it is the trope called Metonymy; so *Toga*=peace; compare Cicero. *Arma virumque*—a Hyperbaton. "*Consilia*" for "*considia*," because one's mind gets quieter when one sits down!⁹ Servius thinks the style of the

¹ Floruit 54 A.D. A specimen of his method is probably to be found in *Saturn.*, V. 2—6.

² *Serv. ad. Georg.*, I. 230.

³ *Gell.*, X. 16.

⁴ *Gell.*, V. 8.

⁵ An example of his criticism in *Gell.*, IX. 9.

⁶ To these may be added the grammarian Nonius, who makes a wide use of Vergil. He is, according to Nettleship, the biggest fool in the world.

⁷ On Servius, see E. Thomas, *Scoliaes de Virgile*.

⁸ Thilo, Linke, Teuffel, Klotz and Nettleship say the shorter.

⁹ Cf. his wild explanation of *Ecl.*, I. 1—3.

Fourth Aeneid "*paene comicus*"! Yet he knows true poetry when he sees it: Lucan, he says,¹ seems to have written rather a history than a poem: and he realised the national spirit of the Aeneid.²

Of the two sets of Scholia, those of Verona are excellent, and often fuller than Servius: those of Berne more allegorical.

Beside these grammarians we have to consider the other class mentioned, the authors of good taste, both Pagan and Christian. Seneca³ the elder is the first to quote Vergil; the younger does so constantly, calls him "*disertissimus*,"⁴ "*maximus vates et velut divino ore instinctus*,"⁵ "*qui caelestium notitiâ gloriatur*,"⁶ and explains how the grammarian and the philosopher respectively regard Vergil.⁷ Tacitus is full of his influence.⁸ Petronius praises him,⁹ as do Ovid,¹⁰ Quintilian¹¹ and Martial.¹² Ausonius affords a strange instance of how a man could know his Vergil by heart (witness his Cento) and yet descend to the monstrosities of the "*Technopaegnon*." Silius Italicus¹³ and Statius¹⁴ carried their reverence to the point of pilgrimages to their master's tomb.

For the early Christian writers Vergil had an interest apart from that of the Messianic Eclogue. Prudentius¹⁵ studied him to good effect: Tertullian and Lactantius knew him well, while Augustine¹⁶ and Jerome¹⁷ were haunted by his verses all their lives.

A remarkable instance of a later writer being inspired by Vergil is that of Sulpicius Severus (circ. 400 A.D.): one or two examples of neat quotation must suffice. A snake "*quasi incantata carminibus CAERULA COLLA deposuit*,"¹⁸ S. Martin preaching "*infremuit, NEC MORTALE SONANS praedicabat*,"¹⁹

The state of learning then, as it regards Vergil, about the year 400 A.D., was somewhat as follows:—

The grammarians had obscured him by conjectures²⁰ in hard places, by wanton interpolation, and by far-fetched explanations: the rhetoricians had turned him into an authority for "figures" and a storehouse of "themes" for

¹ *Ad. Aen.*, I. 382.

² *Ad. Aen.*, VI. 752.

³ *Suasor.*, I., II., IV. and *Controv.*, XVI.

⁴ *Dial.*, VIII. 1, 4.

⁵ *Dial.*, X., 9. 2.

⁶ *Epp.*, LXXXVIII. 14.

⁷ *Epp.*, CVIII. 24-29.

⁸ *E.g.* "*quibus cruda ac viridis senectus*." *Agric.*, 29.

⁹ *Sat.*, 118.

¹⁰ Quoted above, p. 1.

¹¹ *Passim*.

¹² VIII. 18.

¹³ *Plin. Epp.*, III. 7. 8. *Mart.*, VII. 63.

¹⁴ *Silv.* IV. 4, 54. Cf. *Theb.*, XII. 816.

¹⁵ See his *Psychomachia*.

¹⁶ *Conf.* I. 13; *De Civ. Dei.*, I. 8.

¹⁷ *Epp.* XXXV. and XLIX.

¹⁸ *Dial.* I. 10 and *Aen.*, II. 381.

¹⁹ *Dial.* II. 4 and *Aen.*, VI. 50; cf. *Dial.*, III. 18 and *Aen.*, VI. 885.

²⁰ Vid. Ribbeck, *Prol.* 203.

declamation¹: the pedants prized him only as a "*doctus poeta*,"² possessing that learning and "correctness" which secured the popularity of Statius: while only a few here and there had any idea of Vergil's real merit, or the aim of the Aeneid.

Even these last, like Augustine, were moved by the poem, and yet knew not why: and this was because Rome never had from beginning to end any notion of poetical criticism. Poetry was criticised, it is true, but not as such. Thus Terence, though an inferior dramatist, was usually preferred to Plautus because his Latin was better. Horace's criticism of Vergil might equally well have been made on an orator. So far in fact were oratory and the poetic art confused that one Annius Florus³ wrote a book called "*Vergilius orator an poeta?*" And this too was the reason why Lucan, Statius, Silius, and Valerius Flaccus were accepted as poets. Roman literature had no "Longinus": for Quintilian is only an improved Dionysius of Halicarnassus.⁴

¹ *Servius ad Aen.* X. 18, says Titianus and Calvus "themata omnia de Vergilio elicuerunt ad dicendi usum." Cf. *Ribbeck*, 188; and Augustine, *Conf.* I., 17, for the same custom in Africa.

² Even Niebuhr thought Vergil's learning his chief claim to fame! (Nettleship, *Essays*, I. 98, note 2).

³ Circ. 100 A.D. What remains of him has been edited by Jahn in his *Florus*, Lips., 1852.

⁴ Yet he realised that Vergil was something more than a master of rhetoric. VIII. 3. 79: and VIII. 6. 18 and 25.

CHAPTER II.

THE ALLEGORICAL METHOD AS APPLIED TO HOMER AND VERGIL (DOWN TO MACROBIUS): AND THE GROWING AUTHORITY OF VERGIL.

Two characteristics which redeem several of the Vergilian commentators from the fate of the mere pedant are traceable from the first century A.D. onwards. They are—first, the gradual application to Vergil, but only partially and in detail, of the allegorising process which Homer had already experienced, and secondly, his recognition as an authority of ever growing importance at first on grammar, “figures” and the like, and finally on everything under the sun.

To understand rightly the position of Macrobius, it is better to sketch briefly both these tendencies, the second of which was brought to its climax in the *Saturnalia*, while the former was almost entirely neglected by Macrobius and only fully developed by Fulgentius. Let us take first the history of allegory as applied to Homer and Vergil.

The early attacks on the morality of Homer by Xenophanes of Colophon, Heraclitus and Pythagoras, led some of his admirers to suggest that the literal meaning was not the real one. A deeper sense (afterward known as *ὑπόνοια*¹) was said to underlie the literal statements of the poet. An early exponent of this theory was Theagenes of Rhegium (circ. 525 B.C.), who taught that the poems contained a double allegory, moral and physical; thus Pallas is opposed to Ares as wisdom to folly.² So Anaxagoras (470 B.C.) saw the rays of the sun in the arrows of Apollo,³ and taught his pupils to allegorise all that needed it⁴: thus Metrodorus (died 464 B.C.) turned the gods into elements.⁵ Protagoras and Hippias also are said to have allegorised Homer, and Stesimbrotus and Ion of Ephesus “interpreted” him, probably in the same way.

All these, it would seem, allegorised the Homeric poems as a whole: *i.e.*, they regarded them as teaching a moral

¹ Cf. Xen. *Symp.* III. 6. Plat. *Rep.* 378 D.

² Schol. Venet. on *Il.* XX. 67.

⁴ Diog. Laert., II. 11.

³ Schol. on *Od.*, II. 104.

⁵ Tatian, *c. Graecos*, 202 D.

lesson, while not necessarily containing a line of true history (much like the Pilgrim's Progress): but from the fourth century B.C. onwards attention was given to allegorising and commenting on details, and the mental horizon of critics grew smaller with the advance of Alexandrine pedantry. Two rival schools appear, those of Pergamum and Alexandria, the former led by Zeno of Citium, who "allegorised," and was attacked subsequently by Aristarchus.¹ Allegorical interpretation was henceforward a characteristic of the Pergamene school². Callisthenes (c. 330 B.C.) is said to have "rationalised" Homer, and was one more of the many against whom Aristarchus upheld the literal meaning of the Homeric poems.

But the critics of this period, especially the Alexandrines, hardly ever rose above the consideration of details. This of course was not a fault confined entirely to that age, for Aristotle³ complains of the "old Homerists" who saw small resemblances and not large ones. The epigram⁴ of Herodicus on the followers of Aristarchus is well known: even the "*Problems*" attributed to Aristotle⁵ exhibit much pedantry of detail.

A late allegorist of Homer is Porphyry (233—301? A.D.), who made⁶ *Odyssey*, XIII. 102—112, a mystical description of the whole universe: in several respects, as we shall see later, he resembles Fulgentius. Finally comes Tzetzes (c. 1150 A.D.) with ten thousand lines of Allegories on the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

The catalogue appears rather tedious, but is not uninteresting for the purposes of a comparison with the interpretation of Vergil. Both in the attention paid to detail and in the growth of allegory, the fates of Homer and Vergil bear much resemblance. If Demetrius of Scepsis could write an encyclopaedia of thirty books on sixty lines of the second *Iliad* (containing a list of Trojan forces), whole treatises were written on short passages of the sixth *Aeneid*.⁷ If Zoilus was Homeromastix, Carvilius Pictor wrote an Aeneidomastix.

The growth of Vergilian allegory can similarly be traced from Asper, in whom it seems to have its beginnings, through Aelius Donatus⁸ to Servius and the Scholia Bernensia. The

¹ *Diog. Laert.*, VII. 4.

² Cleanthes of Assos, Zeno's successor, first used the word ἀλληγορικῶς (A. C. Pearson, *Fragments of Zeno and Cleanthes*, p. 293).

³ *Met.*, XIII. 6, 7. Cf. *Xen. Mem.*, IV. 2. 10.

⁴ γωνιοβόμβυκες, etc. *Athen.* 222 A. Cf. *Anth. Pal.*, XI. 321.

⁵ *Aristotelis Fragmenta*, ed. V. Rose, Lips., 1886, p. 120 sqq.

⁶ In his "*Cave of the Nymphs*."

⁷ *Servius ad Aen.*, VI. init.

⁸ *Serv. Proem, ad. Ecl.* Donatus held that Vergil's three works represented the three chief phases of human development.

latter, according to their own account, drew from "Gallus and Gaudentius," who must accordingly be ranked among the allegorists. The method of Servius needs a few words of explanation.

We must first solve definitely the question "how much of what goes under his name is the real Servius?" before we can say how far he allegorised: at present¹ the most contrary views are set forth in the *Commentary*. Servius makes the golden bough² equivalent to the letter Upsilon, an emblem of human life with the Pythagoreans. Yet he professes³ to dislike a *continued* allegorical interpretation—and gives a most wild one on the beginning of the first Eclogue.

But on the whole, allegory down to and including Servius is only of detail: what traces it leaves in Macrobius are also of detail,⁴ and it is not until Fulgentius that Vergil becomes, like Homer, totally allegorised.

The other tendency we noticed was that of attributing authority to Vergil. The beginnings of this are early and hard to trace.

We find the rhetoricians soon making him an authority for "figures," and the grammarians, schoolmasters and lexicographers a criterion for forms of words. His early critics, while keen in defending him against unjust accusations, admitted that he could err, and his great admirer Gellius notes one or two faults.⁵ But gradually extraordinary powers were claimed for him: Metrodorus asserted that his astrology was perfect, Martial⁶ that Vergil could have beaten both Horace and Varius in their own spheres of literature. Seneca⁷ half thinks him inspired: "*clamat ecce maximus vates et velut divino ore instinctus salutare carmen canit.*" It was doubtless some such feeling that gave rise to the *Sortes Vergilianae*, a custom fairly common by the time of Hadrian, who practised it himself.⁸

Aelius Donatus is the first regular commentator to adopt this line of thought. He attributes to Vergil an extraordinary degree of wisdom, which the poet embodied, he considers, in allegorical form. Servius is the next writer in whom the same tendency appears; he quotes⁹ with approval the statement of Metrodorus that Vergil was a perfect astrologer, and

¹ Even the work of Thilo has not solved all the difficulties.

² *Ad. Aen.*, VI. 186.

³ *Ad. Ed.*, III. 20. *Refutandae enim sunt allegoriae in bucolico carmine, nisi cum ex aliqua agrorum perditorum necessitate descendunt.*

⁴ The instances are collected in cap. III. below.

⁵ I., 22. 12 and X. 29. 4.

⁶ VIII. 18.

⁸ *Spartianus*, in vit. Hadr.

⁷ *Dial.*, X. 9. 2.

⁹ *Ad. Georg.*, I. 230.

lauds his general wisdom in the introduction to the sixth Aeneid. The climax is reached when Macrobius claims no longer simply authority, but absolute infallibility, for his idol.

Such then is the history of the two tendencies we noted: we have seen how "allegory" culminated in Fulgentius (of whom we shall give an account later), and authority in Macrobius. Let us now consider the work and the critical principles of Macrobius.

CHAPTER III.

MACROBIUS: HIS WORK AND HIS METHOD.

DURING the first century A.D. there arose in the Roman world of letters that passion for "miscellanies" of all kinds, of which the *Noctes Atticae* of Gellius¹ afford a good specimen, and which continued late into the Middle Ages, being adopted also by Christian scholars such as Bede and Isidore.

It was this common practice which made Macrobius throw his eulogy of Vergil, together with some entirely alien discussions, into a single work called the *Saturnalia* from the time when the supposed conversations took place. Thus in addition to the Vergilian portion of the work (roughly, Books III. to VI. inclusive), we have an opening conversation in I. 3, on the civil day, a collection of jokes in Book II., a subject renewed, together with that of foods, in Book VII., which also contains chapters on drunkenness in men and women, vertigo, baldness, blushing, sight, and the final grand disputation "whether the hen or the egg was first."

Beside the Vergilian books we have in the *Saturnalia*, it would seem from VI. 10. fin., that another may be missing, which dealt with Vergil's knowledge of augury. Pontanus (in loco) thinks that there was an eighth book, now lost, and that John of Salisbury drew largely upon it.² Barthius on the other hand thinks it possible that the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* may be the required book.

Like the other miscellanists, Macrobius takes almost all his matter from previous writers and compilers; he frankly acknowledges as much, and also admits the fiction of the dialogue.³ We need not enter into the question of his sources,⁴ but may adopt the conclusion of Nettleship, that about the year 400 A.D., Macrobius, Servius, Philargyrius and the authors of the two sets of Scholia had a common fund of materials from which each drew independently of the rest.

In the treatise which professes to be "extracted from

¹ His Preface gives the names of several such compilations.

² Pontanus however seems to have tampered with the text in more than one place and cannot be trusted; see his note on *Sat.*, II. 8, fin. On John's debt to Macrobius, see cap. IV. below.

³ *Sat.*, I. 1.

⁴ See the Bibliography, s. vv. Linke & Wissowa.

Macrobius by Johannes," and which is known as "*De Differentiis et Societatibus Graeci Latiniqve verbi*," there are five references to Vergil, who is in each case appealed to as an authority on word-forms.¹ Macrobius is no doubt taking his illustrations from one of the many grammarians who made Vergil their criterion, and he himself in one passage² asserts Vergilian usage as a final standard of appeal:—"Vergilium, *cujus auctoritati omnis retro aetas et quae secuta est vel sequetur, libens concesserit.*"³

The Vergilian references in the *Commentary* are few but interesting. The two "gates of dreams" are expounded in I. 3: Vergil is said to have in mind the sacred number seven when he says, "*O terque quaterque beati*"⁴; his account of Hades contains an allegory⁵; and by "*magnus annus*" he means the solar year.⁶ Vergil is "*doctissimus vates*,"⁷ and his omniscience is several times affirmed. He is "*nullius disciplinae expers*,"⁸ "*disciplinarum omnium peritissimus*,"⁹ "*quem nullius unquam disciplinae error involvit*,"¹⁰ "*quem constat erroris ignarum*."¹¹ Yet it is admitted that Vergil often contents himself with copying Homer: "*Homerum ipsum et in omnibus imitatore hujus Maronem.*"¹²

To these references we shall refer later: we now approach the Vergilian books in the *Saturnalia*, prefixing, for convenience, the synopsis of L. Jan.

First Day.

Symmachus defends Vergil from Evangelus, I. 24.

Second Day.

Eustathius on Vergil's astrology, and } lost.¹³
Flavianus on his augury,

Vettius Praetextatus on his knowledge of *jus pontificium*,
III. 1—12, fin.

Third Day.

Symmachus on Vergil's Rhetoric, IV. (? some lost).

Eusebius on his oratory, V. 1.

¹ Passis crinibus, not pansis (§ de temp. perfecto), short final "o" (§ de passiva declinat.), the imperative "adès" (§ de imperativo modo), infinitive for gerund, e.g., amor cognoscere for cognoscendi (§ de infinito modo), and frequentative verbs (§ de frequent. formâ).

² In the § de passiva declinat.

³ The authenticity of this treatise is very doubtful.

⁴ *Comm.*, I. 6. ⁵ I. 9. ⁶ II. 11. ⁷ I. 13. ⁸ I. 6.
⁹ I. 15. ¹⁰ II. 8. ¹¹ II. 8, fin. ¹² II. 8; cf. I. 7.

¹³ The position and even existence of this section are, as we saw, disputed.

Eustathius on his debt to Homer, V. 2—17.

„ on various passages, V. 18—22.

Furius on his debt to Latin poets in whole verses, VI. 1—3.

Caecina on his debt in single words, VI. 4, 5.

Servius on various passages, VI. 6 to end.

Running rapidly through the *Saturnalia*,¹ we find in the very opening words of the dialogue, “*tentanti mihi . . . aditus tuos et mollissima consultandi tempora*,”² a reminiscence of *Aen.* IV. 293 and 423. The first subject discussed, that of the civil day (I. 3), is illustrated from Vergil³: he is quoted in chapters VII. and VIII., and his use of *magnus annus* is explained in I. 14.

The first hint in the *Saturnalia* of Vergil’s omniscience is in I. 16, “*Maro omnium disciplinarum peritus*.” In the same chapter he is “*Homerus Mantuanus*,” and when he says—

“Vos, O clarissima mundi
Lumina, labentem caelo qui ducitis annum,
Liber et Alma Ceres.”

Vergil is deferring to the opinions of both the old and the modern Romans, the former keeping time by the moon, the latter by the sun.⁴

In I. 24, the regular “*laudatio*” of Vergil begins. Evangelus, the villain of the piece and the counterpart of Plato’s Thrasymachus, had already shewn his character in I. 11 (init.) by jesting at Praetextatus, and now begins to scoff openly at the powers his friends attribute to their idol. The company all shudder at his audacity and agree that each will take one branch of learning and prove Vergil an adept therein. This ends Book I.: the second book deals as we saw with jokes and foods (and we have reason to be grateful that Macrobius did not try to prove Vergil the best joker or gourmand); and the third begins with Praetextatus’ proof of Vergil’s acquaintance with *jus pontificium*.

The poet was aware that for purification before a sacrifice to the *di superi* ablution was needed, while aspersion was enough for a sacrifice to the *di inferni*.⁵ And then his very words are the correct ones: *porriciam*, not *projiciam*: *voti reus*: *orantem . . . arasque tenentem*.⁶ “*Laetum . . . paecana canentes*” is

¹ To save space I omit an account of the “persons of the dialogue,” who are merely lay figures for Macrobius’ purposes.

² *Sat.*, I. 2, init.

³ Three passages from *Aen.*, VI.

⁴ *Sat.*, I. 16, fin. and 18, fin.

⁵ III. 1.

⁶ III. 2.

a periphrasis for "*vitulantes*" (= *voce laetantes*, according to Titius). Vergil makes a correct use of *sacer*, *sanctus*, *delubrum*, *penates*: his animals are the proper ones for each sacrifice.¹ He knew all about the *sacra* not only of Rome, but also of foreign peoples²: he is right in calling Venus "*deus*" (cap. VIII.) and knew how a city's tutelar gods should be called out (cap. IX.).

Hereupon Evangelus breaks in with the objection that Ateius Capito and Labeo had said bulls were not sacrificed to Jove, while Vergil says—

"Caelicolum regi mactabam in litore taurum."³

"A sexton would know better!"⁴ Praetextatus explains (in a manner like that of some Old Testament apologists) that this was done on purpose to usher in the portent that followed, the

"Horrendum dictu et visu mirabile monstrum."

In like manner the objection about wine being offered to Ceres (cap. XI.) is answered.

In Book IV. Eusebius treats of Vergil's rhetorical skill. His *pathos* is double: one kind consists in the description of externals, e.g.,

"Obstipuit, steteruntque comae":

the other is "*in tenore orationis*," e.g.,

"Moriemur inultae,

Sed moriamur, ait."

Eusebius⁵ takes one speech from Vergil and shows that it contains a multitude of "figures"; *ecphonesis*, *quaestiunculae*, *hyperbole*, *ironia*, *querela*, another *hyperbole*, more *querelae*, an "*argumentum a minore* to increase the pathos," *maledictio*, and finally an "*argumentum a simili*, *conveniens ex praecedentibus*." In chapter III. we have pathos of all kinds:—of age, fortune, weakness, place, time, cause, mode, matter, comparison, and *pathos a maiori et minori*!

In Book V. Eusebius continuing shows that while Cicero has only one style, "*copiosum*," Vergil has not only this, but also the "*breve*" of Sallust, the "*siccum*" of Fronto, and the "*pingue*" of Pliny and Symmachus, and he adds examples.⁶ Vergil, in short, is like nature, containing all styles and all things, and possessing the united graces of all the Attic orators.

¹ *Sat.*, III. 3—5.

² E.g., the bloodless altar of Apollo at Delos: *Sat.*, III. 6.

³ *Aen.*, III. 21.

⁴ *Sat.*, III. 10.

⁵ IV. 2.

⁶ Cf. Quintilian on the various styles of Homer, II. 17, 8 and XII. 10, 64.

Evangelus again scoffs¹: "why, Vergil could not have known Greek." This is to give Eustathius his cue for treating of Vergil's Greek models, Theocritus, Hesiod, Aratus, Pisander, Homer, Pindar and Apollonius. He decides that the Roman poet is sometimes better than his model, sometimes not so good, sometimes just equal to him (more examples, all labelled). Vergil even imitated purposely some faults of Homer!²

Macrobius, with his methodical mind, decides that Homer's "catalogue" is better than that of the tenth *Aeneid*, because the former is geographically arranged and the latter is not.³ In imitating Pindar the Roman has not been very successful⁴: but he has so well told the story of Dido that though it is well known to be false, it seems almost true. Vergil's "Graecisms" are then discussed, and several pages of "parallels" follow, including a chapter on his words for "cups."

Furius Albinus asserts, in the sixth book, that Vergil did the old Latin poets a service in making some of their lines immortal by taking them over bodily. Then follows a list of verses borrowed from Ennius, Lucretius, Furius, Lucilius, Pacuvius, Naevius, Varius, Catullus and Accius. Vergil also took over many passages that had already been translated from Homer by others.⁵ His archaisms, epithets, etc., have all precedents in earlier poets (cap. IV.).

Finally Servius explains *vexare*, *illaudatus*, *squalere*, *lituus*, *maturare*, *vestibulum*, *bidens* and *eques*, and expounds the allegory of the wooden horse.⁶

Such is the *olla podrida* which Macrobius has placed before us; and it affords us considerable insight both into his own mind and into that of the average cultured gentleman of that period.

It is clear that in the *Saturnalia* he is applying to Vergil much the same method which he used in commenting on Cicero in the *Somnium Scipionis*. Similarly his materials for the *Commentary* seem to have been drawn mainly from Plotinus and Porphyry in the same way that large extracts of Gellius and others appear in the *Saturnalia*.

Macrobius considers Cicero "*nullius sectae inscius veteribus approbatae*,"⁷ a philosopher as well as an orator, and invulnerable against criticism.⁸ Each of these remarks he would also

¹ *Sat.*, V. 2, init. ² V. 14. ³ V. 15. ⁴ V. 17. ⁵ VI. 3.

⁶ This is also in the *Commentary* of Servius; but is it original or interpolated from Macrobius?

⁷ *Comm.*, I. 17, fin.

⁸ *Sat.*, I. 24.

have affirmed as true of Vergil. But the main difference between Macrobius' methods of treating Cicero and Vergil is that the former is very *allegorical* (which is not surprising when we remember his sources), while the latter deals rather with the *authority* of Vergil. It is true that we have hints of Vergilian allegory in *Comm.*, I. 6 (on the number seven), and I. 9 (the description of Hades in *Aen.*, VI.), while "*arcani sensus*" are mentioned in *Sat.*, I. 24, and the various kinds of wood used in building the famous horse are given allegorical meanings.¹ But wherever this tendency to allegorise appears in Macrobius, it is always confined to single phrases of Vergil, while the *Dream* is rather interpreted as a continuous allegory.

We have already seen that the form of the *Saturnalia*, a dialogue on miscellaneous subjects, was very common in post-Augustan literature: in that respect Macrobius is not original. But one original and ludicrous feature of his method is that while he chooses living men² for his "persons of the dialogue," he puts into their mouths long extracts from scholars of a previous age. To make Servius reel off chapters of Gellius as his own is as if the writer of a modern symposium should make Sir R. Jebb give as original a lecture taken wholly from Bentley or Porson.

The method of Macrobius thus resolves itself into a system of wholesale borrowing from all and any who will help to swell the hymn of praise to Maro. The *value* of the method cannot be estimated until we have considered the subsequent history of Vergilian criticism, and we shall then be able to sketch the relative merits and demerits of Macrobius and his fellow critics.

¹ *Sat.*, VI. 10, fin.

² Even Evangelus was a real character.

CHAPTER IV.

LATER DEVELOPMENTS AND REPRESENTATIVE SCHOLARS.

THE influence of Vergil on the literature of the Middle Ages, from the time of Macrobius onwards, affords a fascinating subject both to the scholar and to the student of human nature.

Lists have been drawn up containing Vergilian reminiscences in the Latin poets from the fifth century to the twelfth,¹ and showing the use made of him in schools: our present aim is rather to give some idea of the light in which he was regarded by various mediæval writers, by selecting a few representative scholars from the fifth century to the beginning of the fourteenth.

About a hundred years² subsequent to Macrobius there appears in Latin literature the grotesque figure of a Christian writer named Fabius Planciades Fulgentius,³ a mythologist, and a grammarian of the type of Nonius. His only importance lies in the fact that he carried to its climax (by a true *reductio ad absurdum*) the allegorical method of Vergilian interpretation. In his treatise "*De Continentia Vergiliana*," or "What is hidden in the works of Vergil," Fulgentius undertakes to show the real meaning of the *Aeneid*. The *Georgics*, he says, have such a very deep meaning that all his learning cannot worthily expound them; the first treating of astrology, the second of physiognomy and medicine, the third of augury and the fourth of music. The *Aeneid* he considers within his grasp, so he summons the spirit of Vergil to expound that work.

Vergil appears and condescendingly explains that the *Aeneid* is an allegory of human life. The storm and shipwreck represents man's birth into this troublous world: Books II. and III. represent childhood and its love of wonders: Ulysses, who is good sense, conquers the Cyclops, or ignorance. In Book IV. the passion of love is experienced and mastered: then the grown youth takes up noble exercises (the funeral games of *Aen.* V.): he also enters on

¹ Zappert, *Vergil's Fortleben im M.-A.*, Vienna, 1851.

² The date is still uncertain, but is probably between 480 and 510 A.D.

³ The *Dict. of Christ. Biog.* contains six Fulgentii, but not this one.

the secret truths of philosophy, typified by the descent to Hades. He subsequently attains his goal (*Ausonia*), weds labour (*Lavinia = laborum via*), fights anger in the person of Turnus, who is aided by drunkenness, obstinacy and impiety under the guise of Metiscus, Juturna and Mezentius. The victory of wisdom concludes the parable.

The whole work is of a most wild character. Vergil is made to quote Petronius and Tiberianus: the derivations are unspeakably ludicrous,¹ and proportion is so far neglected that while "*Arma virumque*" takes several pages of exposition, whole books are passed over in a few cursory remarks. To the distorted mind of Fulgentius, Vergil appears not as a sympathetic human poet, but as a strange superhuman personality whose learned mysticism is his only merit. It is in his respect for Vergil's learning and inspiration that Fulgentius most closely approaches Macrobius, and as the latter is the first to assign absolute authority to the works of Vergil, so Fulgentius is the first to give us a complete allegory, thus fully realising the early tendency traced in our second chapter.

But in spite of the serious faults of Fulgentius, he must not be taken as an utter blockhead such as Nonius Marcellus. He was well read for his age: he quotes, of poets, Plautus, Terence, Ovid, Lucan, Juvenal and Ausonius, and of prose authors Cicero, Sallust, Petronius and Apuleius. And the method he applied to Vergil, though to us ridiculous, has a respectable Greek parallel in Porphyry's *Cave of the Nymphs*,² and is certainly no worse than the device either of Priscian, who drew examples for all the rules of grammar and metre from the first line of each book in the *Aeneid*, or of Macrobius himself when he shews that a speech in the *Aeneid* contains most "figures" of rhetoric.³

From Fulgentius to the twelfth century Vergil still held the place of honour in the schools and libraries, in spite of constant protests from Christian bishops. And indeed it seems probable from a specimen passage in *Gregory of Tours*⁴ (sixth century) that most of those who condemned the study of Vergil were well acquainted with him themselves, and could give no reason for his rejection save his non-Christianity. Even this defect was toned down by the work of Fulgentius, who shewed his successors the way to regard Vergil as one divinely inspired with a purely moral message, and therefore not to be dismissed with scorn.

¹ Acheron = sine tempore. Turnus = *θεῦρος νοῦς*. Messapus = *μισῶν ἔπος*.

² For this see cap. II. above.

³ *Sat.*, IV. 2. See p. 43 above.

⁴ In the *Libri Miraculorum*.

Meanwhile, both the work of Fulgentius and the books of Macrobius dealing with Vergil's rhetoric continued to be studied: the latter being often copied out into MSS. containing the biography attributed to Donatus. But few, if any, striking works on Vergil appear until the twelfth century, with its semi-renaissance, a revival confined almost entirely to Latin Literature.

The two chief scholars of Vergilian interest in the twelfth century were Bernard Silvester¹ of Tours and John of Salisbury, the famous pupil of another great scholar, Bernard of Chartres.

Bernard Silvester flourished about 1140 A.D. and his best known work consists of the two books *De Mundi Universitate* (often referred to as the *Megacosmus* and *Microcosmus*). They are written in the same style as Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, containing hexameters (one set only), prose of a good and often musical quality, and Ovidian elegiacs of considerable merit.² The whole is a mystical compound of allegory and mythological exposition. His other work is a Commentary (still mostly unpublished) on the first six books of the *Aeneid*, written in a style which leads to the supposition that he had read either Fulgentius himself or some later book based on him.

In this work Vergil is represented as describing the history of the human soul during its life on earth³: he cared nothing for the glorious history of Rome, but for the moral improvement of the reader. The seven ships of Aeneas' fleet are the seven "desires" of seeing, hearing, tasting, etc. The second book is treated briefly as describing "*pueritia*," the third "*adolescentia*." "*Antandros est inconstantia, primum adolescentiae vitium*."⁴ Thrace is explained as meaning avarice; Polydorus, grief. Polydorus is buried in Thrace, since grief lurks underneath riches. Bernard follows Fulgentius in explaining Drepanum as "*drimius puer*," i.e., *puerilis acerbitas*. In book IV. passion is aroused and assuaged (as in the *Vergiliana continentia*) and the games of *Aen.* V. are interpreted as manly exercises. The sixth *Aeneid* is briefly treated, since the allegory is supposed to be here more obvious.

The same Fulgentian method of interpretation is found in the "*Policraticus*" of John of Salisbury, not many years later.⁵

¹ R. L. Poole (*Ill. Med. Thought*, 114, note 9), Comparetti, and others identify Silvester with Bernard of Chartres, but modern scholars generally deny this. See the Bibliography, s. v. Bernard.

² See esp. II. 10, sub. fin.

³ Aeneas = "*ennos, demas*," habitator corporis.

⁴ Anti = contra, andros = vir; and inconstantia is contra virilitatem.

⁵ Floruit circ. 1170 A.D.

John was a pupil of Bernard of Chartres, whom he praises in his "*Metalogicus*," and also knew the works of Bernard Silvester. His learning was wide, and he took much from Cicero, Gellius, Petronius, Apuleius, Macrobius and Augustine: but he did not know Lucretius (as some assert) and his Fulgentian style of allegory is borrowed from Silvester.

In many cases we can see that John is simply copying out Macrobius: and beside these verifiable passages, he seems (in *Polic.* VIII. 6) to have several extracts from a lost part of the *Saturnalia*.¹

The exegesis of the *Aeneid* in the *Policraticus* shows that John of Salisbury is simply following Bernard Silvester. "*Vergilius . . . totius philosophiae rimatur arcana*"²: "*sub imagine fabularum totius philosophiae exprimit veritatem*"³: "*sex aetatum gradus sex librorum distinctionibus prudenter expressit*."⁴ Thus John, like Bernard (and unlike Fulgentius), only treats the first half of the *Aeneid*, and in precisely the same way.

In the "*Metalogicus*" John of Salisbury takes Cornificius, the "detractor of Vergil" in the life attributed to Donatus, as the type of jealous mediocrity as he saw it around him in the sciolists of his day, and he refers to these several times as *Cornificiani*.

A hundred and forty years later, during the period of Dante's literary activity, we have a reference to Vergil in Richard of Bury, who says that the poet often copied Lucretius.⁵ This statement Richard probably got from Gellius⁶ or Macrobius,⁷ for he was well acquainted with both, and quotes the latter in the very next section. Since Richard is known to have possessed a copy of John of Salisbury, there is little doubt that he was well acquainted, if he did not also agree, with both the Macrobian and Fulgentian views of Vergil.

The last great figure within our period, and the greatest of all, is that of Dante Alighieri. Combining in one person the encyclopaedic learning of a schoolman with the intuitive good sense and the originality of a true poet, he presented the world with a new conception of Vergil as an essentially human and sympathetic writer, though still conceived as abnormally learned.

Dante's point of view in literature is wholly novel.

¹ He quotes Flavianus in *Pol.*, II. 26: but V. Rose (in "*Hermes*") thinks this is not the Flavianus who appears in Macrobius. He also cites (as Portunianus) Postumianus, another person of the dialogue.

² *Pol.*, II. 15.

³ *Ib.*, VI. 22.

⁴ *Ib.*, VIII. 24.

⁵ *Philobib.*, 162.

⁶ *I.* 21. 7.

⁷ *Sat.*, VI. 1-6.

"Figures"—rhetoric and all its branches—are banished, and he is one of the first to recognise a distinct style belonging to poetry as apart from oratorical prose. With apparent prescience, Dante anticipates and answers all Wordsworth's remarks on the subject, and, like a new "Longinus," lays down the laws of true literature.¹

Dante knew his Vergil as few did: but not with the knowledge of the cento-writers. The spirit, not only the letter, became part of his very being; and without the *Aeneid* we should have had nothing like the *Commedia*.

Dante had read the current *Life of Vergil*, but not Macrobius or Fulgentius, to whom he never refers. His allegorical interpretations were taken from either John of Salisbury, Bernard, or some kindred writer: and it is noteworthy that he never represents Vergil as possessed of magical powers, as most people then believed him to have been.

Vergil is he "who honours every science and art,"² superior to Homer³ (whom however Dante had not read), "the sea of all wisdom,"⁴ "the sage who all things knew,"⁵ "our greatest poet,"⁶ etc. Dante acknowledges his own debt to Vergil,⁷ and makes Statius do the same.⁸ He gives as classical models Vergil, Statius, Lucan and Ovid.⁹ He himself loves Italy as Vergil did.¹⁰ Like Fulgentius, Dante calls Vergil up from the dead: but what a difference there is between the two Vergils! That of Fulgentius is a proud mystic, hardly human: that of Dante is courteous, if condescending: rather like a mother instructing her child.

But it was impossible for even Dante to shake off the effects of centuries of misinterpretation. We find in him specimens of sane, simple exegesis, *e.g.*, on "*Iam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna*," he explains "by 'Virgin' he meant Justice, also called Astraea. By 'Saturnian kingdoms' he meant the best ages, also called golden."¹¹ But there are in his works many traces of pedantry: *e.g.*, "Vergil . . . calls Aeneas 'O light' (which was an act), 'O hope of the Trojans' (which is a passion), though he was neither a light nor a hope, but the source whence came to them the light of counsel, and the object in whom reposed all the hope of their deliverance."¹² He also considers Vergil to have taught in the early books of the *Aeneid* the virtues appertaining to

¹ See esp. *De Vulg. Elog.*, II. 1 and 2, and 6.

² *Inferno*, IV. 73.

³ *Ib.*, line 87.

⁴ *Inf.*, VIII. 7.

⁵ *Ib.*, VII. 3.

⁶ *Convito*, IV. 26. 60.

⁷ *Inf.*, I. 79 sqq.

⁸ *Purgat.*, XXI. 94 sqq

⁹ *De Vulg. Elog.*, II. 6 fin.

¹⁰ *Inf.*, I. 106—108.

¹¹ *De Monarchia*, I. 11, init.

¹² *Conv.*, III. 11. 159 sqq.

different periods of life,¹ a doctrine he evidently drew from John, Bernard, or some transcriber of Fulgentius. He considers Vergil omniscient as fully as did Macrobius,² and on occasion can outdo even Fulgentius in allegory. He allegorises indeed not only Vergil but Ovid,³ Statius,⁴ and Lucan,⁵ and similarly the text of Scripture.⁶

He had, moreover, a notable advantage over the early interpreters, since while they seem to have regarded the literal inspiration of a poet as incompatible with an allegorical content,⁷ Dante, profiting by the methods adopted in Scriptural exegesis, asserts that in addition to the literal meaning, quite as important are the allegorical, moral and anagogical senses.⁸

Thus in Dante culminate jointly the principles of "authority" and "allegory." Elaborated severally by Macrobius and Fulgentius, they finally fuse harmoniously in the noble conception with which Dante presents us.

Vergilian allegory was current for some time after Dante, finding supporters in Alberti and Landini, while Ludovicus Vives allegorised the *Eclogues*, and Tasso thought himself to be imitating Vergil's method when he made his *Jerusalem Liberated* one long series of parables.

But these concern us not. "*Non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa.*"⁹

¹ *Conv.*, IV. 26. 60.

² *Inf.*, VII. 3, and VIII. 7.

³ *Conv.*, IV. 27. 157 sqq.

⁴ *Ib.*, IV. 25.

⁵ *Ib.*, IV. 28; cp. *Pharsalia*, II. 338 sqq.

⁶ *E.g.*, *Conv.*, IV. 22. 150 sqq.

⁷ Not that it really is so, but no Vergilian critic before Dante actually joined the two methods.

⁸ Examples in *Conv.*, II. 1, and *Epp.*, X. 133 sqq.

⁹ *Inf.*, III. 51.

CHAPTER V.

THE POSITION OF MACROBIUS AMONG VERGILIAN CRITICS.

THE admirers of Vergil may be roughly divided according to the reasons which made them admire his work. Some few, like Augustine, were captivated by the sheer beauty of the poem: others, like Dante, recognised in the *Aeneid* the same passionate love of Italy and the history of Rome which they themselves felt: while the majority consisted of those who revered Vergil either as the prince of schoolmasters or a lecturer on moral philosophy.

Now Macrobius evidently thought Vergil of greater worth than all other Roman writers put together. He never even mentions Ovid, Tibullus, Propertius, Silius, Statius and Valerius Flaccus of poets, Livy and Tacitus of historians, or Quintilian. Catullus and Horace he quotes twice each, Persius once, Juvenal three times, and Lucan only once. In literary taste he is a reactionary like Fronto, who never quotes even Vergil.

If the reason for Macrobius' admiration had been a love of good literature, we should certainly have had references to Ovid and Livy, if no more. And Macrobius cannot be supposed to have shared Vergil's enthusiasm for Roman history, being himself an alien.¹ He must therefore be placed among those who looked upon Vergil as the great Instructor.

It is thus clear that in claiming infallibility for Vergil, Macrobius is only putting the coping-stone to the process which had gradually transformed the literary taste of the Roman world into an admiration for *faultless* poetry alone. The "*doctus poeta*" such as Statius was sure of popularity from the first century A.D. onwards. It was in vain that one or two saner spirits protested against such a criterion of poetic art: it was in vain to cast derision on the idea that a great poem could be analysed away into irony, hyperbole, etc., and nothing more than "figures": or that similarly a number of select "figures" properly arranged would make a great poem.

With such an attitude as that of Macrobius, we cannot look for signs of real insight beyond what he took over from

¹ *Sat.*, I. 1. Nos sub alio ortos caelo.

previous writers. And so it is that Vergil's best qualities he never appreciates at all or even suspects of existing, while the minor virtues of the poet came in for a wealth of wrong-headed commendation. Thus the idea in—

“Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem”

never strikes him; he cannot see the wood for trees: and while weighing in his pedantic balance the merits and demerits of Vergil's imitations from the Greek, he nowhere shows such critical insight as occurs, rather to our surprise, in a passage of Gellius which is worth transcribing.

“Quando ex poematis Graecis vertendae imitandaeque sunt insignes sententiae, non semper aiunt¹ enitendum ut omnia omnino verba in eum in quem dicta sunt modum vertamus. *Perdunt enim gratiam pleraque si quasi invita et recusantia transferantur.* Scitè ergo et considerate Vergilius, cum aut Homeri . . . aut quorundam aliorum locos effingeret, partim reliquit, alia expressit.”²

If there is one quality more than another that we have a right to expect in critics, it is *insight*, for that faculty is the very essence of the critical art; but for examples of this we shall turn in vain to Macrobius. True, he has some obvious reflections, *e.g.*, that *τύχη* never occurs in Homer³; but even this remark was probably borrowed, and he does not expand it in what seems to us the obvious way, by proceeding to explain how Vergil's whole attitude to life differs from that of Homer.

Instead of the wide sympathy with the uncertainty of human existence which is for us one of Vergil's greatest charms,⁴ Macrobius gives us gobbets illustrating Vergil's knowledge of the canons of *pathos*. A speech like that of the frenzied Dido he analyses into *pathos a majori et minori*! Contrast the case of Augustine. He once wept for Dido, and now knows her tale untrue. Similarly Macrobius knows it is not true: but while Augustine asks “Why did I weep?” Macrobius asks⁵ “Why is it such a favourite with artists?”

No early critic had the insight to note, what was remarked by Napoleon, that Vergil does not really understand war: he thinks rather of its results, the sorrow and devastation it brings. Of its details he knows but little, and no poet who

¹ This shows that the sentiment was not originated by Gellius: but he evidently had the taste to admire it.

² IX. 9, followed by a good example of criticism from Probus.

³ *Sat.*, V. 16.

⁴ And in which Quintus Smyrnaeus, a contemporary of Macrobius, strikingly resembles him: see esp. *Posthom. Z.*

⁵ *Sat.*, V. 17. 5 and 6.

could not himself feel the Homeric *χάρμη* was ever capable of representing warlike scenes in the proper spirit.

Insight is the great desideratum: better, like Cornutus, be original in our criticisms, however captious, than collect second-hand praises with Macrobius. And if we *must* compile, there are two ways of compiling: the few chapters on Vergil in *Gellius* are worth more critically than the whole of Macrobius. Similarly, if we *must* allegorise, let the process be thorough: better imagine a consistent scheme of parable running through a work than snatch at isolated phrases and so involve endless contradictions. There are even two ways of treating a poet as omniscient. We may take him to be divinely inspired, more or less a mere mouthpiece; or as one who has by his own diligence attained the farthest limits which human learning can reach. It is impossible to admire a writer who could not err if he tried: but when Dante gives us the conception of Vergil as the noblest achievement of the human reason,¹ we feel at once that this view, however incorrect, is immeasurably better than that of Macrobius or Fulgentius.

And this leads us to a curious conclusion. We have seen the course of "authority" culminate in Macrobius, and that of allegory in Fulgentius, and each taken alone appeared ridiculous. But when Dante, as we noted, fuses the two theories, the result is something unlike either: from the union, as it were, of two colourless fluids results a mixture of a bright and pleasing hue.

Yet it was not the mere combination of different methods that produced this effect: just as (to use another chemical simile) the elements of water will not, when brought together, produce water unless an electric shock be added, so something more was needed to consummate the transformation, and this something was sympathy.

Neither Macrobius nor Fulgentius was a poet: neither had any passionate love of Italy: while in both respects Dante felt himself an inheritor of Vergil's mantle. It is thus that he has given a striking proof of the truism that for appreciation, sympathy is indispensable. The critic best fitted to judge a writer is he who most resembles his author: so, only great critics understand great poets. And Macrobius was not great.

¹ In the *Commedia*, Vergil = Reason, Beatrice = Faith, not as opposed to one another, but harmonising, one beginning where the other ends.

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